

i learned  
it by  
watching  
YOU

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a collection of words,  
phrases, and gestures  
that i've stolen from  
people in order to  
make life easier  
to navigate...



From what I understand, it's pretty common to pick up various quirks from people you spend a lot of time with. Sure enough, the things that I've absorbed come from friends, co-workers, creators I like a lot, and a family member or two.

However.

I wonder if it is slightly less common to consciously know exactly which person I am copying in the moments that I am copying them...? I dunno. Sometimes I take pieces of a person's mannerism(s) because I've identified that they'll help me navigate certain social contexts. Other times I just take words and phrases that are fun to say.

In other words...it is my belief that life is meaningless and we gotta get thru each day somehow!!! Peace b with u amen

## **Taken From S**

When learning of an obstacle in the way of a plan or just something they hadn't considered yet, they do a sharp inhale through the nose immediately followed by a bummed sounding "mmm". I have taken this to use in this exact kind of scenario.

Also their good or neutral mood "um". I don't know how to describe this one exactly...but it looks like this:

uhhhmmm

...close enough. Although S uses it pretty much as a default "um", I personally use it like a sort of prelude to the apology I'm about to give someone for not knowing the answer to their question.

## Taken From A

Their laugh that seems to communicate "well that is delightful". And it's three distinct notes from the throat. Ascending Do Mi Sol? I don't laugh like them every time I laugh, but it comes out if I feel kind of stupid and want to appear smarter? lol I dunno man I don't make the rules.

Also their "the". It's hard to spell the pronunciation, but it's something like "thih" or maybe even "t'hih". Like a flattened "the" that lasts a few beats. I use this a little more frequently. I notice it come out the most, however, when I am speaking to multiple people at once and trying to convey that I *am* knowledgable about a topic...I just need a second to find my next word.

## **Taken From Big Joel (YouTuber)**

The word "extremely". He says it at the same speed as the rest of his words, yet each syllable is given an equal time to shine. It's more like, "ex-tream-uhl-ee".

I use this pronunciation in all contexts because it is the superior pronunciation of this word. So clear. So powerful So ex-tream-uhl-ee perfect. UGH!

## **Taken From K**

Their specific flavor of acknowledging that they're listening to you via head nods during a conversation.

To perform this gesture: start with the chin slightly raised, slightly clenched jaw, and two very, very quick micro nods repeated ad hoc. Throw in one or two fast blinks along with the nods to complete this motion correctly.

I use this when I am indeed acknowledging that I am listening, buuuut also am more just waiting for my turn to speak lol

## Taken From V

This one comes and goes for me, but it's the word "dollar". They would pronounce it, "**d**ahl-er", slight emphasis on the "d" and the word is sort of swallowed as it's said. And I know it sounds a little Californian, but this person is not from California.

Five **d**ahl-ers.

Do you have a **d**ahl-er?

I'm hella low on **d**ahl-ers for burritos, bra.

There is just something so satisfying about opening the word up like that??



## **Taken From N**

This one is a little different. It is the earliest one I can remember picking up and using right away. I was probably about 9. N wasn't that much older. Maybe 12. Someone younger than both of us was talking to them, but N didn't seem to be paying that much attention. Yet, they periodically said, "oh really?" while still sounding disinterested. This was a revelation to me.

Sometimes, my silence during conversations I wasn't engaged with would annoy the people who were trying to talk to me. But sprinkling in the occasional flat "oh really?" suddenly communicated disinterest in a...polite...way?? What sorcery is this!

## **Taken From Tim Heidecker (Comedian and Musician)**

This one is a little more subtle, but it's his small nose/throat laugh. It's like two or three rapid fire, low pitched breathy laughs from the nose. Watch (the real) Tim for just a few minutes, you'll probably catch it.

I use it a lot when telling a kind of irreverent story or a joke that I can't help but laugh at as I tell it. Also it makes me feel kinda cute (I think Tim is cute).

## **Taken From D**

Their, "Oooh, interesting" face.

To perform this gesture: start with the head straight. Upon hearing the interesting thing, eyebrows up and corners of lips down (like the Obama "not bad" meme). Maintain this expression then the eyes should look right as you tilt the head left. Before completing the tilt, include a small, *small* little shake of the head left and right.

I use it if I am trying to convey a willingness to listen and openness to someone's idea or thought. This is especially useful with strangers or acquaintances or in a retail setting (I've used it frequently in all my customer service roles).

## Taken From A

It's a walk A does. I'd notice it surface when A was feeling awkward, cold, or trying to walk quickly.

To perform this gesture: walk at a pace that is just shy of a jog, with your hands in fists, barely swinging. Basically, be aware that you *could* jog up to the person to reduce their waiting time, come very *close* to jogging, but ultimately refuse.

I tend to only do this one myself if I'm feeling awkward because someone is waiting for me to catch up to them from a distance. I jog for no man (but I do still feel rather...b u n g l e s o m e).

**Taken From Griffin McElroy  
(30 Under 30 Media Luminary)**

“Bayyy-BEEEE!” Ah, yes. Whether I am punctuating a genuinely excited sentiment or being a sarcastic little shit about something, this expression is great for many occasions.

Note: I don’t believe Griffin McElroy actually invented this one. He just happens to be the first person I heard pronounce it like this. Also, my partner says that Griffin might have gotten this from a different Griffin (Griffin Newman). So, who was the first Griffin to bestow a resounding BAYBEEEE upon us?

The world may never know.

## **Taken From Thought Slime (YouTuber)**

"YeahButLike" – just like that as all one word. It's also important to add a beat after saying it. I'll usually spit this out when discussing something kind of argumentative with someone. It's just a little more robust than a single "but" alone. A "but" with strength in numbers! And quick. Rolls off the tongue well.

I also occasionally mimic her long "E" habits when I'm feeling goofy. A word with an "E" sound at the end is kind of turned into a slide whistle sound effect—a *classic* TS sound effect—so this makes sense. Like this:

"Huh?? Not meeeeee!"

## **Taken From J**

Their "ew", pronounced "ill".

So simple. So easy. So good. And extremely (you better be saying that correctly) addicting. This is another long-timer that I picked up ages ago. I used it constantly as a goofy teenager, but still tend to use it in lighthearted or fun situations.

And why not? "Ill" as "ew" is highly versatile and can be used in a variety of contexts. Pairs particularly nicely with a vintage 1980s California style "dude".

Try it out...you'll see. You'll see.

## Taken From E

This is kind of a modified one because it's mostly just...a sound effect.

Whenever I'd see E, they'd greet me by saying my name as, like, a high pitched squeak? And since my name can be shortened to a single syllable it was basically just a noise. So it was like, "KEHM!" (Cam)

I don't really need to exclaim my own name very often (though, you know, not never). Instead, I found myself wrapping the high-pitched sound effect around the word "Phew!" I guess because it can also be an exclamation when I'm overheated or just lifted something heavy or whatever. It just automatically slips out these days.



## Taken From Dad

This is perhaps the most normal one in here. I didn't have a use for these right away, but now that I'm older and have nibblings, I find them very fun.

Whenever my cousins and I were very into a thing, my dad would like to say, "Oh, we don't even *like* [insert the child's obsession]!" And we'd demand that we do, and he'd say, "We *do*?!?" Like he was all confused about it lol

Also, when a kid is playing with something and very clearly not inviting you to play with it, reaching over to (gently) take it from them while saying "*ThaAaAank you!*" can lead to some very funny outcomes. (don't...actually take the thing from them, tho)

## **Bonus stuff**

Perhaps there will be more of these someday, but this was all I could remember for now. I like to think I have my own idiosyncrasies that are not (knowingly and shamelessly) plucked from the mouths or very being of others. But that exploration is a whole nother zine for a whole nother time.

For now, please enjoy some more phrases that I also say which I think are just...like...general and/or midwest? In combination with being white lol In any case, these have helped me survive working in the service industry for as long as I have.

- Just gonna squeeze right past ya.
- Ope!
- Ooof! (see also: "Ooofa. Doofa.")
- Okie-doke.
- No worries!
- I do apologize.
- Hey-o! (I'm more likely to type than say this one)
- Whelp.
- Fascinating. (okay actually, I probably got this from Spock)

liquid  
playhouse

2023